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Letter from Taizé

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Letter from Kolkata

Letter 2007

Thirty years ago, Brother Roger spent some time in Kolkata (Calcutta) with brothers and young people from different continents, living in a poor district and taking part in Mother Teresa's work with abandoned children and the dying. He brought back the *Letter to the People of God*, made public during a young adult meeting at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Later on, he wrote several messages and three books with Mother Teresa.

This presence in 1976 was the seed of a lasting relationship of our community with the Christians of India. Visits throughout the country, two intercontinental meetings in Madras and the constant arrival of young Indians to Taizé have represented different facets of this relationship. And Kolkata continued to signify for us both human distress and the faces of people giving their lives for the very poorest and thus becoming beacons of light.

So I thought it was important to return to Kolkata and to prepare a meeting there. It brought together 6000 young people, most of them Asians, from October 5-9, 2006. The meeting was an attempt to give a new dimension to the "pilgrimage of trust"—journeying alongside young people from Asia on their own continent, listening to them and supporting their hope. The *Letter from Kolkata* was written after this gathering, to be made public at the European meeting in Zagreb.

As we continue the "pilgrimage of trust on earth" that brings together young people from many countries, we understand more and more deeply this reality: all humanity forms a single family and God lives within every human being without exception.

In India, as in other parts of Asia, we have discovered how much the quite natural attention paid to the presence of God in the whole of creation implies respect for the other person and what is sacred for him or her. Today, in modern societies, it is so important to reawaken that attentiveness to God and that respect for human beings.

Every human being is sacred for God. Christ opened his arms on the cross to gather together all humanity in God. If he sends us to the ends of the earth to communicate God's love, this takes place above all through a dialogue of life. God never places us on the level of a power struggle with those who do not know him.

1 At the beginning of his ministry, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, "All people belong to one and the same family." (*Message for World Day of Peace, 2006*)

In Kolkata, Christians are a minority among the other great historical religions. In India, tensions between religions have sometimes led to serious violence. And yet, mutual respect represents the essence of the relationship between religions. The feasts of each tradition are respected by the others and can even become an occasion for sharing.



2 A young man from Lebanon, the father of a family, wrote to us while the bombings in the Middle East were intensifying on both sides, "Peace of heart is possible! When you have been humiliated, the temptation is to want to humiliate in return. In spite of the suffering, in spite of the hatred which is growing stronger and stronger, in spite of the desire for vengeance that wells up in us during moments of weakness, I believe in that peace. Yes, peace here and now!"

So many young people across the world are ready to make the unity of the human family more visible. They let themselves be challenged by a question: how can we resist all forms of violence and discrimination; how can we go beyond walls of hatred or indifference? These walls exist between peoples and continents, but they are also close to each of us, and are

even found within the human heart. It is up to us, then, to make a choice: to choose to love, to choose hope.

The huge problems of our societies can foster defeatism. By choosing to love, we discover a space of freedom to create a future for ourselves and for those entrusted to us.

With a minimum of resources, God makes us creators with him, even where circumstances are not favorable. Going towards others, sometimes with empty hands, listening, trying to understand... and already a deadlocked situation can be transformed.

God awaits us in those who are poorer than we are. "What you have done to one of these, the least, you have done to me."*

In the North as in the South, great inequalities keep alive a fear of the future. Some people courageously devote their energies to changing structures of injustice.

We all need to ask ourselves about our lifestyle. We need to simplify our lives. And then we will become more able to go towards others with open hearts.

Today there are a host of initiatives for sharing available to everyone. Inventive and fairer forms of trade, or micro-credit, have demonstrated that economic growth and solidarity with the poorest can go hand in hand. Some people make sure that part of their income contributes to the establishment of greater justice.

Giving our time is precious if our societies are to acquire a more human appearance. Everyone can try to listen to and support even just one other person: a neglected child, a young person with no work or hope, someone who is deprived, an elderly person.

4 Inequalities sooner or later lead to violence. 20% of the world population, living in the most developed countries, use 80% of the natural resources of our planet. A responsible management of the sources of energy and of drinking water is becoming more and more urgent.



3 Some Taizé brothers have been living for thirty years in Bangladesh, with people who are almost all Muslims. They share the daily life of the poorest and most abandoned. One of them wrote, "We are discovering more and more that those who are rejected by society because of their weakness and their apparent uselessness are a presence of God. If we welcome them, they lead us progressively to leave behind a world of hypercompetition and to head towards a world of communion of hearts. In the great diversity of religions and cultures, our presence in Bangladesh wishes to be the sign that the service of our vulnerable brothers and sisters opens a road of peace and unity." What Mother Teresa began in Kolkata continues to shine forth through her sisters. Taking care of the poorest and showing love to them are such clear signs of God's love. So many other people across the world are walking along the same road of solidarity; without them where would we be on this earth?

Pope Benedict XVI

Dear young people, the Pope wishes that all of you meeting in Zagreb, continuing the pilgrimage of trust on earth launched by dear Brother Roger, may become more and more aware of the importance of brotherhood among people and the necessary openness to all the people around you. In this way, in a renewed attentiveness to others, you will make your contribution to the establishment of more fraternal relationships, so that on the entire planet the human family may become a concrete reality, where each person is welcomed and loved for him- or herself, recognized and respected as a child of God. In this land of Croatia, marked by conflicts in the past, you are an eloquent sign of hope and you demonstrate that you, the young, want a new humanity based on the recognition of all people, independent of their nationality or their religion.

As Christians, marked by the one Baptism that makes us all sons and daughters of the same Father, you are called to show that the gospel message is universal and comes to meet every human being on the road of his or her life. By the way you consider others, by your attentiveness to each one, may you make Christ present, who calls you to love and to act like him. In this way you will be truly free and you will live out your human and Christian responsibility.

Entrusting you to the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of believers, His Holiness Benedict XVI grants you an affectionate apostolic Blessing with all his heart, as well as to the Brothers of Taizé, to all those who have organized this pilgrimage, to the Pastors and the faithful who are welcoming you, and to your families.

The Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr Kofi Annan

Dear friends of Taizé and young people from across the world, it is with great pleasure that I address to you all, participants and organizers, my warmest greetings on the occasion of this new stage of the "pilgrimage of trust on earth".

The presence, year after year, of thousands of young adults from the entire world in these European meetings expresses well the force of the message of reconciliation and peace conveyed by the Taizé Community. This message is equally at the heart of the activity of the United Nations Organization throughout the world, for whatever our convictions may be, we all aspire to live in peace and to bequeath to our children a world reconciled with itself.

During the coming days you will reflect on the well-springs of your faith and your involvement in society. Like this meeting, your faith must be a pledge of tolerance and openness. Peace and harmony between peoples and civilizations requires the creation of common spaces of discussion. Look for these common spaces. Look for points of encounter with those who have different convictions. If each person thinks all by themselves while closing their minds to the convictions of other people, instead of coming closer to that better world we are dreaming of, we make the world we live in harsher and less safe. It is more and more obvious that the peoples of the earth are destined to form a single community, relatively united. Our societies themselves are becoming more and more mixed. If you, the young, show the way by committing yourselves, on the level of your community or country, to an open dialogue, based on respect for different points of view and on the dignity and the equality of all human beings, then perhaps we can make that ideal of peace a reality for the entire planet.

Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople

Dear young Christians, from Constantinople, the seat of the ecumenical Patriarchate, on the feast of the Nativity of Jesus Christ, we call down his blessing upon each one of you: in the year 2007, may we all, receiving the Holy Spirit, be more fully united to Christ.

With joy, at the invitation of the beloved Taizé Community, we send you this message. We rejoice with you for, living in the midst of a society sometimes far from the Lord, you seek to head towards the Kingdom of Heaven, with the Word of God as a guide able to transfigure you. Your behaviour reminds us of those words of Saint John: "I have written to you, young people, because you are strong, the word of God remains in you and you have overcome the spirit of evil" (1 John 2:14).

As for the theme of the Zagreb meeting, inspired by the Letter of dear Brother Alois, we say this to you: yes, the universal unity of human beings is irrefutable, for our existence bears the mark of God's creation. But, because of the distance between our will and our actions, we must also struggle for our inner being to be renewed by means of the helps which the Lord has granted us and which are conserved in the Church: prayer, the study of the word of God, sacramental life, the conformity of our entire existence to the Gospel.

In the confidence that, enriched spiritually, you will renew your faithfulness to the Lord once you have returned home, and according to your possibilities you will let the ideal of the Gospel shine forth in our world, we assure you of our prayers and our blessings, desiring that you may become like living icons, images of Christ, true children of the Triune God, blessed, filled with hope, and loved.

Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow

Dear brothers and sisters, with joy I send a message of love and peace to all the participants in the 29th young adult meeting in Zagreb.

Your annual gathering is called a "pilgrimage of trust on earth". For you the young, as for all, it is very important to look at life as a pilgrimage, undertaken in trust in God. Let us strive to remember how short the road of earthly life is. Each of us can say with David, the holy psalmist: "I live as a foreigner on the earth, do not hide your commandments from me" (Ps 119:19). The awareness that we are foreigners on the earth in no way implies pessimism or a feeling of despair. We Christians are convinced that our earthly journey does not lead to nothingness, but towards a new and eternal life. We must always remember that orienting ourselves only towards money, success, comfort and pleasure takes away life's meaning. That road seems attractive, but inevitably it leads to a dead-end. Invite rather people of your age to entrust their lives to God; he alone can give us the fullness and the joy of living.

The road towards God is not easy and requires sacrifices and hard work. But only such a life is worthy of human beings, those prodigious creatures of God. Only this road leads towards the Creator in whom our souls find peace. With a view to this true peace, it is worth laying down our worldly cares and taking upon ourselves the light burden of Christ.

May this meeting strengthen you in your determination to make your journey a true pilgrimage and may it help you find good companions for the journey and to realize that God is with us and helps us.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams

It is with great hope and gratitude that I write to wish you all every blessing and enrichment for the Young Adult European Meeting in Zagreb. The theme of a "pilgrimage of trust" represents one of the most urgent necessities of our time. Everywhere it seems that suspicion between faith communities and races or nations has grown, encouraged by all those who live in fear or are in love with power. In developed societies, there is much cynicism about all authorities and all ideals. We need trust as we need fresh air; and our world is growing breathless and airless with suspicion, doubt and despair.

God's Spirit, God's Holy Breath, is what we need in order to see each other freshly and confidently. I pray that your meeting will be an occasion to draw breath – both to find a space in which you may renew your own vision and a time to gather determination for the work ahead of building a true "commonwealth" of human beings, a community without walls in which we serve each other and are fed by each other as we dare to trust each other and trust our Maker and Saviour, our faithfully loving God.

Letter from Taizé

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Stages in the pilgrimage of trust on earth: 2007

Around the meeting in Zagreb

Before the meeting in Zagreb, Brother Alois went with two other brothers to SERBIA from December 23-25, to visit the Orthodox Church in that country.

After the meeting in Zagreb, most of the brothers went to Ljubljana, in SLOVENIA, where a prayer was celebrated in the cathedral.

Two international meetings

A young adult meeting will be held in Latin America from October 10-14, 2007, in the city of Cochabamba (Bolivia).

It will be open to young people from all continents. Europeans who wish to take part must prepare themselves by coming to Taizé for a week of meetings.

The next young adult European meeting will take place from December 28, 2007 to January 1, 2008, in the city of Geneva and the surrounding area.

Some other dates to remember

Brussels Cathedral, prayer January 30: "For Europe, opening ways of trust."

Montreal, from Friday April 27 to Sunday April 29: "Leaving discouragement behind, finding new hope."

Stockholm, meeting for Sweden and other Nordic countries, from Thursday May 3 to Sunday May 6: "Choosing to love, choosing hope."

In Asia: Bangkok (Thailand) Cathedral, November 10; Hong Kong Cathedral, November 13; Yogyakarta (Indonesia), November 24; Cambodia, November 25-29.

Visits to the Churches

In the course of this past year, Brother Alois with other brothers went to visit Church leaders:

Pope Benedict XVI

Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople

World Council of Churches Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil

Council of Christian Churches in France, Paris

Patriarch Alexis II of Moscow

Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams

Lutheran Bishop Huber, president of the Evangelical Church in Germany

"By these visits I would like to show that my brothers and I are passionately searching for communion among Christians. In Taizé we would like to contribute to give a greater visibility to the communion which, in Christ, already exists among all the baptized."

Visits to the brothers on other continents

Brother Alois also has begun to visit the brothers who live in small groups across the world, often among the very poor, in Brazil, Bangladesh, Senegal and Korea.

God of all loving, as we

seek you with trust, we wait even for our inner contradictions to be opened to the presence of your Holy Spirit.

MARCH

DAILY READINGS

25 Jn 8:1-11

SUN Jesus said to the woman who had been brought before him: "Where are those who were accusing you? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir", she said. "Neither do I condemn you", said Jesus, "Go, and sin no more."

26 W 1:11-15

Mon God did not make death and takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. God created all things for life.

27 Jr 29:11-14

Tue The plans I have for you, says the Lord, are plans not for disaster but for peace, to give you a future and a hope.

28 2 Co 3:16-18

Wed Paul writes: All of us, with our unveiled faces like mirrors reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the image that we reflect in brighter and brighter glory.

29 Lk 17:20-21

Thu Jesus said: The coming of the kingdom of God cannot be observed, for the kingdom of God is among you.

30 1 Jn 4:16-19

Fri There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear.

31 1 Th 5:1-11

Sat You are children of light, children of the day. So let us not slumber but stay awake.

18 2 Co 5:18-21

SUN Paul writes: In Christ, God has reconciled us to himself and entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

19 Lk 2:41-52

Mon St JOSEPH When Mary and Joseph found the child Jesus in the Temple, he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

20 Dt 30:1-14

Tue Moses said to the people: If you return to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, then he will have compassion on you.

21 Mt 6:25-34

Wed Jesus said: Seek first God's kingdom and his justice, and all other things will be given you in addition.

22 Jn 12:23-26

Thu Jesus said: Anyone who is too attached to their own life will lose it, while anyone who is not attached to their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

23 1 Jn 3:16-24

Fri We can reassure our hearts before God, whenever our hearts condemn us; for God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.

24 Ps 86

Sat Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart that I may revere you.

11 Ex 3:1-15

SUN The Lord says: I have seen the misery of my people. I have heard them crying out because of their oppressors, yes, I know their suffering and I have come down to rescue them.

12 Lk 12:49-53

Mon Jesus said: I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already burning!

13 Rm 10:11-13

Tue Paul writes: There is no difference between persons: all have the same Lord, who generously blesses all who call on him.

14 1 Co 1:4-9

Wed God is faithful and has called you to live in communion with his Son, Jesus Christ.

15 Lk 10:1-9

Thu Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest may send out workers into his harvest.

16 Ps 84

Fri Happy are those who find their strength in you, Lord. As they pass through the valley of tears they make it a place of living springs.

17 Is 58:6-8

Sat If you break unjust chains to let the oppressed go free, if you share your food with the hungry and shelter the homeless, then your light will break forth like the dawn and your wound will be quickly healed.

4 Lk 9:28-36

SUN Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed. Then a cloud enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud saying: This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him.

5 Lk 12:22-31

Mon Jesus said: Do not be anxious about your life. Can any of you, by worrying about it, add a single moment to the length of your life?

6 1 P 4:7-11

Tue Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

7 Sl 27:30-28:7

Wed Forgive your neighbour any wrongs. For if someone nurses anger against another, how can they then ask for healing from God?

8 2 Tm 1:6-14

Thu Paul writes: Hold to the sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

9 Sl 2:1-11

Fri If you want to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials. Be sincere of heart and steadfast. Do not be alarmed by adversity, but attach yourself to the Lord and do not leave him.

10 Rm 15:7-13

Sat May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

1 1 Tm 6:11-16

Thu Paul writes to Timothy: Fight the good fight of faith and win the eternal life to which you were called.

2 Dt 32:18-11

Fri God finds his people in the desert, in a barren wasteland. God shields them and cares for them, guarding them as the apple of his eye.

3 Ps 34

Sat Those who fix their eyes on God will become radiant; shame will no longer cloud their faces.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Lk 19:28-40

1 SUN PALM SUNDAY
As Jesus came into Jerusalem, the crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out: Blessed is the one who comes as king in the name of the Lord!

Jn 16:20-22

2 Mon Before his passion, Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again and you hearts will be full of joy. And that joy no one shall take from you.

Rm 5:1-11

3 Tue The proof that God loves us is this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been reconciled to God by Christ's death, how much more shall we be saved by his life!

2 Co 1:8-11

4 Wed Paul writes: When overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

Lk 20:5:13-17

5 Thu Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and was raised to life for them.

Lk 23:33-34

6 Fri GOOD FRIDAY
On the cross, Jesus said: Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.

Rm 6:3-11

7 Sat Buried with Christ in baptism, we live a new life with him.

Lk 24:1-8

8 SUN EASTER DAY
At the empty tomb, the women were met by two angels who said, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

Ph 2:1-11

9 Mon Being in every way like a human being, Christ Jesus was humble yet, and became obedient to death, death on a cross. Therefore God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.

Ep 4:1-6

10 Tue Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, just as you have all been called to one hope.

1 Jn 3:11-16

11 Wed John writes: We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters.

Jn 3:13-17

12 Thu God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Mt 13:1-23

13 Fri Jesus said to his disciples: Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear!

Rv 3:20-22

14 Sat The Risen Christ says: I stand at the door, knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me.

Jn 20:19-23

15 SUN The Risen Christ said to the disciples: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Mk 4:26-29

16 Mon Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A person scatters seed on the ground. Night and day the seed sprouts and grows, they know not how.

Col 3:1-5

17 Tue Since you have been raised with Christ, set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Rv 2:8-11

18 Wed The Lord says: I know your trials and your poverty, yet you are rich: do not fear suffering, stay faithful until death and I will give you the crown of life.

Rm 12:14-18,21

19 Thu Do not repay evil with evil. Seek to do what is regarded as good by all. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Ga 5:13-14

20 Fri You were called to be free. Do not use your freedom for self-indulgence but to serve one another in love.

Jn 6:47-51

21 Sat Jesus said: I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live for ever.

Jn 21:15-17

22 SUN Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter replied, "Lord, you know everything: you know I love you."

1 Jn 4:7-11

23 Mon This is love: not that we loved God, but that God loved us and sent his Son for the forgiveness of our sins.

Mt 5:1-12

24 Tue Jesus said: Happy are they who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled. Happy are the merciful, for mercy will be shown to them.

Mk 16:15-20

25 Wed St MARK
After Jesus' Ascension, the disciples went out and proclaimed the Gospel everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word.

Ph 2:1-11

26 Thu Paul writes: Be of the same mind, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing from selfish ambition. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus himself.

Jr 14:8-9

27 Fri You are our hope, O God. You are among us and we are called by your name.

Pr 4:23

28 Sat Above all else, watch over your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.

Jn 10:22-30

29 SUN Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand.

Heb 11:8-16

30 Mon By faith, Abraham answered God's call and set out for the land he was to inherit. And he set out without knowing where he was going.

APRIL

DAILY READINGS

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Choosing to love, choosing hope. As we walk along this road with perseverance, we are surprised to discover that, before we have done anything, God has chosen each one of us: "Do not be afraid; I have called you by name; you belong to me. I am your God, you are precious in my sight and I love you."*

In prayer, we place ourselves and those entrusted to us before the benevolent eyes of God. God welcomes us as we are, with what is good, but also with our inner contradictions and even our faults.

The Gospel assures us that our weaknesses can become a doorway through which the Holy Spirit enters our life.

Thirty years ago, Brother Roger wrote in Calcutta: "Prayer is a source

of loving for you. In total selflessness, abandon yourself, body and spirit. Every day go deeply into a few lines of the Scriptures, to be brought face to face with Another, with the Risen Lord. In silence, let a living word of Christ be born in you, then put it into practice right away."

As he was leaving Calcutta, he added:

"Now we are leaving after having discovered, in the very heart of deep distress, a people's astonishing vitality, and having encountered witnesses to a different future for all. As a contribution to this future, the People of God has one possibility all its own: spread across the entire world, it can build up a parable of sharing in the human family. Such a parable will have force enough to propagate itself, shaking even the most immovable structures and creating communion in the human family."**

This appeal of Brother Roger's is more relevant than ever today. Scattered across the world, Christians can sustain hope for all by rooting their lives in this amazing news: after the resurrection of Christ, our humanity is no longer fragmented.

5 On the occasion of Brother Roger's funeral, the prior of the Grande Chartreuse, Marcellin Theeuwes, wrote: "The dramatic circumstances of Brother Roger's death are merely an outer covering that serves to bring still more to light the vulnerability that he cultivated as a doorway preferred by God in order to come in and be with us."
(See also 2 Corinthians 12:10.)

6 A Christian of the fourth century expressed well how prayer and commitment are complementary. For him, taking part in the Eucharist impels us to solidarity with the poor: "You wish to honour the body of the Saviour? The same one who said *This is my body* also said: *You saw I was hungry and you didn't give me to eat. What you did not do to one of the least, you refused to me!* So honour Christ by sharing your possessions with the poor." (Saint John Chrysostom, *Homily 50 on Matthew*.)



7 Already the Christians of the first generation, a tiny minority in the world, had this conviction: Christ destroyed the wall of separation between peoples by giving his life on the cross.
(See Ephesians 2:14-16.)

How can we be witnesses to a God of love on earth if we allow our separations between Christians to continue? Let us dare to advance towards visible unity! When we turn to Christ together, when we come together to pray, the Holy Spirit is already uniting us. Humbly, in prayer, we learn constantly to belong to one another. Will we have the courage no longer to act without taking others into account?

The closer we come to Christ and to his Gospel, the closer we come to one another.

An exchange of gifts comes about through reciprocal hospitality. All these gifts are necessary today to make the voice of the Gospel audible. Those who have placed their trust in Christ are called to offer their unity to all. And praise of God can burst forth.

9 "The Church's relationship with other religions is dictated by a twofold respect: respect for man in his quest for answers to the deepest questions of his life, and respect for the action of the Spirit in man. (...) Every authentic prayer is prompted by the Holy Spirit, who is mysteriously present in every human heart." (John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*).

As Christians, we cannot hide the fact that at the heart of our faith is Christ Jesus, who relates us to God in a unique way (see 1 Timothy 2:5). But far from making a true dialogue impossible, this absolute commits us to it, because if Jesus is unique, it is by his humility. That is why we can never look down on others in his name, but only welcome them and let ourselves be welcomed by them.

And then that beautiful Gospel parable comes to life: the tiny mustard-seed becomes the largest of the garden plants, so that the birds of the air come to build their nests in it.* Rooted in Christ, we discover a capacity to be open to all, even to those who cannot believe in him or who are indifferent. Christ became the servant of all; he does not humiliate anybody.

More than ever, today we have possibilities to live in communion beyond national borders. God gives us his breath, his Spirit. And we pray, "Guide our steps along the way of peace."**

8 A Christian living in Palestine in the sixth century wrote, "Imagine that the world is a circle, that God is the center, and that the radii are the different ways human beings live. When those who wish to come closer to God walk towards the center of the circle, they come closer to one another at the same time as to God. The closer they come to God, the closer they come to one another. And the closer they come to one another, the closer they come to God." (Dorotheus of Gaza, *Instructions VI.*)



fr. Alois

10 One of those who can support us on this way is Dietrich Bonhoeffer. In the darkest hours of the twentieth century, he gave his life to the point of martyrdom. A few months before his death, he wrote in prison these words which we now sing in Taizé:

"God, let my thoughts be gathered to you. With you there is light, you do not forget me.

With you there is help, with you there is patience.

I do not understand your ways,
But you know the way for me."